



BioMap and Living Waters

Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts

Core Habitats of Norton

This report and associated map provide information about important sites for biodiversity conservation in your area.

This information is intended for conservation planning, and is not intended for use in state regulations.

Produced by:
Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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* Depending on the location of Core Habitats, your city or town may not have all of these sections.

Spring Salamander
(*Gyrinophilus porphyriticus*)
Species of Special Concern



Funding for this project was made available by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, contributions to the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund, and through the State Wildlife Grants Program of the US Fish & Wildlife Service.



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Introduction

In this report, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program provides you with site-specific biodiversity information for your area. Protecting our biodiversity today will help ensure the full variety of species and natural communities that comprise our native flora and fauna will persist for generations to come.

The information in this report is the result of two statewide biodiversity conservation planning projects, **BioMap** and **Living Waters**. The goal of the BioMap project, completed in 2001, was to identify and delineate the most important areas for the long-term viability of terrestrial, wetland, and estuarine elements of biodiversity in Massachusetts. The goal of the Living Waters project, completed in 2003, was to identify and delineate the rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds that are important for freshwater biodiversity in the Commonwealth. These two conservation plans are based on documented observations of rare species, natural communities, and exemplary habitats.

What is a Core Habitat?

Both BioMap and Living Waters delineate **Core Habitats** that identify the most critical sites for biodiversity conservation across the state. Core Habitats represent habitat for the state's most viable rare plant and animal populations and include exemplary natural communities and aquatic habitats. Core Habitats represent a wide diversity of rare species and natural communities (see Table 1), and these areas are also thought to contain virtually all of the other described species in Massachusetts. Statewide, BioMap Core Habitats encompass 1,380,000 acres of uplands and wetlands, and Living Waters identifies 429 Core Habitats in rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds.



Core Habitats and Land Conservation

One of the most effective ways to protect biodiversity for future generations is to protect Core Habitats from adverse human impacts through land conservation. For Living Waters Core Habitats, protection efforts should focus on the **riparian areas**, the areas of land adjacent to water bodies. A naturally vegetated buffer that extends 330 feet (100 meters) from the water's edge helps to maintain cooler water temperature and to maintain the nutrients, energy, and natural flow of water needed by freshwater species.

In Support of Core Habitats

To further ensure the protection of Core Habitats and Massachusetts' biodiversity in the long-term, the BioMap and Living Waters projects identify two additional areas that help support Core Habitats.

In BioMap, areas shown as **Supporting Natural Landscape** provide buffers around the Core Habitats, connectivity between Core Habitats, sufficient space for ecosystems to function, and contiguous undeveloped habitat for common species. Supporting Natural Landscape was



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generated using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model, and its exact boundaries are less important than the general areas that it identifies. Supporting Natural Landscape represents potential land protection priorities once Core Habitat protection has been addressed.

In Living Waters, *Critical Supporting Watersheds* highlight the immediate portion of the watershed that sustains, or possibly degrades, each freshwater Core Habitat. These areas were also identified using a GIS model. Critical Supporting Watersheds represent developed and undeveloped lands, and can be quite large. Critical Supporting Watersheds can be helpful in land-use planning, and while they are not shown on these maps, they can be viewed in the Living Waters report or downloaded from www.mass.gov/mgis.

Understanding Core Habitat Species, Community, and Habitat Lists

What's in the List?

Included in this report is a list of the species, natural communities, and/or aquatic habitats for each Core Habitat in your city or town. The lists are organized by Core Habitat number.

For the larger Core Habitats that span more than one town, the species and community lists refer to the entire Core Habitat, not just the portion that falls within your city or town. For a list of all the state-listed rare species within your city or town's boundary, whether or not they are in Core Habitat, please see the town rare species lists available at www.nhesp.org.

The list of species and communities within a Core Habitat contains only the species and

Table 1. The number of rare species and types of natural communities explicitly included in the BioMap and Living Waters conservation plans, relative to the total number of native species statewide.

BioMap		
Biodiversity Group	Species and Verified Natural Community Types	
	Included in BioMap	Total Statewide
Vascular Plants	246	1,538
Birds	21	221 breeding species
Reptiles	11	25
Amphibians	6	21
Mammals	4	85
Moths and Butterflies	52	An estimated 2,500 to 3,000
Damselflies and Dragonflies	25	An estimated 165
Beetles	10	An estimated 2,500 to 4,000
Natural Communities	92	> 105 community types
Living Waters		
Biodiversity Group	Species	
	Included in Living Waters	Total Statewide
Aquatic Vascular Plants	23	114
Fishes	11	57
Mussels	7	12
Aquatic Invertebrates	23	An estimated > 2500

natural communities that were explicitly included in a given BioMap or Living Waters Core Habitat. Other rare species or examples of other natural communities may fall within the Core Habitat, but for various reasons are not included in the list. For instance, there are a few rare species that are omitted from the list or summary because of their particular sensitivity to the threat of collection. Likewise, the content of many very small Core Habitats are not described in this report or list, often because they contain a single location of a rare plant



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species. Some Core Habitats were created for suites of common species, such as forest birds, which are particularly threatened by habitat fragmentation. In these cases, the individual common species are not listed.

What does 'Status' mean?

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determines a status category for each rare species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, M.G.L. c.131A, and its implementing regulations, 321 CMR 10.00. Rare species are categorized as Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern according to the following:

- **Endangered** species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range or are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts.
- **Threatened** species are likely to become Endangered in Massachusetts in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- **Special Concern** species have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become Threatened in Massachusetts.

In addition, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program maintains an unofficial **watch list** of plants that are tracked due to potential conservation interest or concern, but are not regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or other laws or regulations. Likewise, described natural communities are not regulated any laws or regulations, but they can help to identify ecologically important areas that are worthy of protection. The status of natural

Legal Protection of Biodiversity

BioMap and Living Waters present a powerful vision of what Massachusetts would look like with full protection of the land that supports most of our biodiversity. To create this vision, some populations of state-listed rare species were deemed more likely to survive over the long-term than others.

Regardless of their potential viability, all sites of state-listed species have full legal protection under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (M.G.L. c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). Habitat of state-listed wildlife is also protected under the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.37 and 10.59). The **Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas** shows **Priority Habitats**, which are used for regulation under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M.G.L. c.30) and **Estimated Habitats**, which are used for regulation of rare wildlife habitat under the Wetlands Protection Act. For more information on rare species regulations, see the *Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas*, available from the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program in book and CD formats.

BioMap and Living Waters are conservation planning tools and do not, in any way, supplant the Estimated and Priority Habitat Maps which have regulatory significance. Unless and until the combined BioMap and Living Waters vision is fully realized, we must continue to protect all populations of our state-listed species and their habitats through environmental regulation.

communities reflects the documented number and acreages of each community type in the state:

- **Critically Imperiled** communities typically have 5 or fewer documented sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- **Imperiled** communities typically have 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- **Vulnerable** communities typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.
- **Secure** communities typically have over 100 sites or abundant acreage across the state; however excellent examples are identified as Core Habitat to ensure continued protection.



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Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Following the BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitat species and community lists, there is a descriptive summary of each Core Habitat that occurs in your city or town. This summary highlights some of the outstanding characteristics of each Core Habitat, and will help you learn more about your city or town's biodiversity. You can find out more information about many of these species and natural communities by looking at specific *fact sheets* at www.nhesp.org.

Next Steps

BioMap and Living Waters were created in part to help cities and towns prioritize their land protection efforts. While there are many reasons to conserve land – drinking water protection, recreation, agriculture, aesthetics, and others – BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitats are especially helpful to municipalities seeking to protect the rare species, natural communities, and overall biodiversity within their boundaries. Please use this report and map along with the rare species and community fact sheets to appreciate and understand the biological treasures in your city or town.

Protecting Larger Core Habitats

Core Habitats vary considerably in size. For example, the average BioMap Core Habitat is 800 acres, but Core Habitats can range from less than 10 acres to greater than 100,000 acres. These larger areas reflect the amount of land needed by some animal species for breeding, feeding, nesting, overwintering, and long-term survival. Protecting areas of this size can be

very challenging, and requires developing partnerships with neighboring towns.

Prioritizing the protection of certain areas within larger Core Habitats can be accomplished through further consultation with Natural Heritage Program biologists, and through additional field research to identify the most important areas of the Core Habitat.

Additional Information

If you have any questions about this report, or if you need help protecting land for biodiversity in your community, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program staff looks forward to working with you.

Contact the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program:

by Phone 508-792-7270, Ext. 200

by Fax: 508-792-7821

by Email: natural.heritage@state.ma.us.

by Mail: North Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

The GIS datalayers of BioMap and Living Waters Core Habitats are available for download from MassGIS: www.mass.gov/mgis

Check out www.nhesp.org for information on:

- Rare species in your town
- Rare species fact sheets
- BioMap and Living Waters projects
- Natural Heritage publications, including:
 - * Field guides
 - * Natural Heritage Atlas, and more!



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BioMap: Species and Natural Communities

Norton

Core Habitat BM1161

Vertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Spotted Turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Special Concern

Core Habitat BM1166

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Acidic Graminoid Fen		Vulnerable
Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp		Imperiled
Red Maple Swamp		Secure

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Gypsywort	<i>Lycopus rubellus</i>	Endangered
Long's Bulrush	<i>Scirpus longii</i>	Threatened
Plymouth Gentian	<i>Sabatia kennedyana</i>	Special Concern
Rigid Flax	<i>Linum medium var texanum</i>	Threatened
Round-Fruited False-Loosestrife	<i>Ludwigia sphaerocarpa</i>	Endangered

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Chain Fern Borer Moth	<i>Papaipema stenocelis</i>	Threatened
Hessel's Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys hesseli</i>	Special Concern
Kennedy's Emerald	<i>Somatochlora kennedyi</i>	Endangered
New England Bluet	<i>Enallagma laterale</i>	Special Concern
Sensitive Rare Invertebrate		
Water-Willow Stem Borer	<i>Papaipema sulphurata</i>	Threatened



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BioMap: Species and Natural Communities

Norton

Vertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Threatened
Blue-spotted Salamander	<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>	Special Concern
Eastern Box Turtle	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Special Concern
Four-toed Salamander	<i>Hemidactylium scutatum</i>	Special Concern
Spotted Turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Special Concern

Core Habitat BM1173

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Alluvial Red Maple Swamp		Vulnerable

Core Habitat BM1174

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Alluvial Red Maple Swamp		Vulnerable

Core Habitat BM1177

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Alluvial Red Maple Swamp		Vulnerable

Core Habitat BM1180

Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Alluvial Red Maple Swamp		Vulnerable
Small-River Floodplain Forest		Imperiled



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Norton

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Cat-Tail Sedge	<i>Carex typhina</i>	Threatened

Vertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Threatened
Eastern Box Turtle	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Special Concern
Spotted Turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Special Concern
Wood Turtle	<i>Clemmys insculpta</i>	Special Concern

Core Habitat BM1181

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Small Site for Rare Plant		



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BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries

Norton

Core Habitat BM1161

Vertebrates

This Core Habitat encompasses forested uplands and wetlands in the Great Woods area of Mansfield and Norton. It contains significant habitat for Spotted Turtles, with high likelihood of long-term population viability if adequate areas of habitat can be preserved. The area also contains significant habitat that may be used by Eastern Box Turtles, Marbled Salamanders, and Four-toed Salamanders. This Core Habitat is bounded by roads and development, but inside these boundaries there are largely roadless, forested uplands with Hodges Brook flowing south through the middle of the Core Habitat. There are also numerous wetlands and Potential Vernal Pools that are interspersed with upland habitats.

Core Habitat BM1166

This Core Habitat is one of the largest unfragmented and pristine areas of wetland habitat in eastern Massachusetts. The diverse natural wetland communities provide critical habitat for several rare insects and support globally rare and Endangered plant species. The area contains some of the most important habitat in the state for rare salamanders and turtles, including Blue-spotted Salamanders and Spotted Turtles. Much of this Core Habitat is protected as part of the Hockomock Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains diverse acidic peatlands and forested swamps. This includes the largest and highest-quality Acidic Graminoid Fen in the state, and also the largest Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp in the state. Acidic Graminoid Fens are sedge and Sphagnum-dominated acidic peatlands that experience some groundwater and/or surface water flow but no calcareous seepage. Standing water is often present throughout much of the growing season. Meanwhile, Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamps are acidic, low nutrient basin swamps dominated by Atlantic White Cedar in the overstory and a mixture of species in the understory.

Plants

The state's largest population of the Endangered Round-Fruited Loosestrife, which usually grows along acidic ponds associated with large wetland complexes, is found within this Core Habitat. Several areas along the shore of Lake Nippenicket support populations of the lovely and globally rare Plymouth Gentian.



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BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries

Norton

Invertebrates

Hockomock Swamp is home for many rare invertebrates, including at least three rare species of moths and several rare species of dragonflies and damselflies. For many of these species, Hockomock Swamp is within dispersal distance of several smaller Core Habitats nearby, and may serve as a reservoir population for these peripheral populations. Hockomock Swamp is actually a mosaic of different wetland habitats, including stands of Atlantic White Cedar trees that support a population of Hessel's Hairstreak butterfly, open sunny wetlands with Virginia Chain Fern that are fed on by the rare Chain Fern Borer moth, and Water-willow that is the host plant of the Water-willow Stem Borer moth, a species that occurs nowhere else outside of Massachusetts. Rare dragonflies and damselflies inhabiting Hockomock Swamp include the New England Bluet damselfly and Kennedy's Emerald dragonfly, which is not known to currently occur anywhere else in the state.

Vertebrates

This Core Habitat contains some of the most important areas of habitat in the state for Blue-spotted Salamanders and Spotted Turtles, including large expanses of forested and shrub wetlands and many Certified and Potential Vernal Pools interspersed with upland forest. This area also contains significant habitat for Four-toed Salamanders and likely Eastern Box Turtles and Blanding's Turtles as well. The Core Habitat provides important breeding habitat for birds characteristic of forested and shrub swamps of southeastern Massachusetts. Approximately 20% of this Core Habitat is not currently protected. Especially important are unprotected concentrations of Potential Vernal Pools along the northwestern, northern, southeastern, and southern borders of the Core Habitat.

Core Habitat BM1173

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains a good Alluvial Red Maple Swamp of moderate maturity that is well-buffered by surrounding floodplain swamps and other wetlands. Alluvial Red Maple Swamps are a type of Red Maple Swamp that occurs in low areas along rivers and streams. Regular flooding enriches the soil with nutrients, resulting in an unusual set of associated trees and plants.

Core Habitat BM1174

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp of moderate size and quality along the Canoe River. It has a moderate level of disturbance, resulting from alterations of hydrology of the surrounding area. Alluvial Red Maple Swamps are a type of Red Maple Swamp that occurs in low areas along rivers and streams. Regular flooding enriches the soil with nutrients, resulting in an unusual set of associated trees and plants.



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BioMap: Core Habitat Summaries

Norton

Core Habitat BM1177

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp of moderate size and quality along the Canoe River. It has a moderate level of disturbance, resulting from alterations of hydrology of the surrounding area. Alluvial Red Maple Swamps are a type of Red Maple Swamp that occurs in low areas along rivers and streams. Regular flooding enriches the soil with nutrients, resulting in an unusual set of associated trees and plants.

Core Habitat BM1180

This large, multi-lobed Core Habitat contains riparian and wetland habitats adjacent to the Threemile River and its tributaries, as well as many Potential Vernal Pools. These areas provide significant habitat for four rare turtle species. Also included is a large and high-quality Small-River Floodplain Forest community that supports the rare Cat-Tail Sedge.

Natural Communities

This Core Habitat contains a large and high-quality Small-River Floodplain Forest in Taunton that is free of exotic plant species and well-buffered by surrounding natural forest. Small-River Floodplain Forests are Silver Maple-Green Ash forests occurring on alluvial soils of small rivers and streams. In Norton, a good example of an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp extends along the river, fairly well-buffered from development and with few exotic species. Alluvial Red Maple Swamps are a type of Red Maple Swamp that occurs in low areas along rivers and streams. Regular flooding enriches the soil with nutrients, resulting in an unusual set of associated trees and plants.

Plants

A disjunct population of the Threatened Cat-Tail Sedge, which has a thick inflorescence reminiscent of the Common Cattail, is found here within an emergent marsh in a floodplain. Most populations of this sedge are found in central Massachusetts.

Vertebrates

Numerous meandering stream channels with a good interspersed of bordering wetlands and undeveloped uplands, combined with several observations of turtles, suggest that habitats here support significant populations of Wood Turtles and Spotted Turtles. A recent observation of a Blanding's Turtle, in the context of the long, meandering reaches of the Threemile River and its tributaries, along with the abundant bordering wetlands, suggests that this area may also support a significant population of this species. In fact, this site may represent the southernmost population of Blanding's Turtles known in New England. This Core Habitat also encompasses significant habitat for Eastern Box Turtles, and likely for Four-toed and Marbled Salamanders as well. Most of this Core Habitat is currently unprotected from development.



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Living Waters: Species and Habitats

Norton

Core Habitat LW071

Plants

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Featherfoil	<i>Hottonia inflata</i>	Watch Listed

Core Habitat LW229

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Eastern Pondmussel	<i>Ligumia nasuta</i>	Special Concern

Core Habitat LW233

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Eastern Lampmussel	<i>Lampsilis radiata</i>	-----
Eastern Pondmussel	<i>Ligumia nasuta</i>	Special Concern

Core Habitat LW313

Invertebrates

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Creeper	<i>Strophitus undulatus</i>	Special Concern
Dwarf Wedgemussel	<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>	Endangered
Eastern Lampmussel	<i>Lampsilis radiata</i>	-----
Eastern Pondmussel	<i>Ligumia nasuta</i>	Special Concern
Triangle Floater	<i>Alasmidonta undulata</i>	Special Concern

Fishes

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Bridle Shiner	<i>Notropis bifrenatus</i>	Special Concern



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Norton

Core Habitat LW071

A population of Featherfoil, an uncommon and unusual-looking aquatic plant with feathery leaves, is growing in shallow areas of Chartley Pond. Since this plant is rare in most surrounding states, we must safeguard the Massachusetts populations of this species to avoid further declines in New England.

Core Habitat LW229

A recent survey at one site along the Rumford River documented the presence of the rare Eastern Pondmussel. These freshwater mussels were found in a moderately fast flowing stretch of the river with a cobble bottom and sparse aquatic vegetation. More extensive surveys are needed to explore other sections of the river for additional freshwater mussel habitats.

Core Habitat LW233

The Three Mile River supports three freshwater mussel species, including the rare Eastern Pondmussel and the uncommon Eastern Lampmussel. The Eastern Pondmussel is only known from five rivers in southeastern Massachusetts. Here it has been found dotted along the soft, sandy river banks.

Core Habitat LW313

The Canoe River is a diverse freshwater mussel stream for southeastern Massachusetts. It supports or has supported half of the state's known species, several of which are considered rare. The rare Eastern Pondmussel and Triangle Floater are found along the river in stretches with sand and gravel. Despite recent surveys, the Creeper mussel has not been found here since the early 1980s. The federally- and state Endangered Dwarf Wedgemussel has also been observed in the Canoe River in the past. Due to the apparent suitability of the physical habitat, additional survey work is needed to determine whether these species are still present. Careful management of stormwater runoff and water withdrawals will help protect this key mussel habitat.

This Core Habitat also supports one of eight known populations of Bridle Shiner in the Taunton Watershed. This fish Species of Special Concern is thought to be in decline in eastern Massachusetts as it was found at only 23% of its former sites in recent surveys. The Bridle Shiner is typically found in well-vegetated, quiet waters. It feeds on small aquatic insects and other invertebrates, and is an important part of the freshwater ecosystem as prey for larger fishes.



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Help Save Endangered Wildlife!

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Natural Heritage &
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To learn more about the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and the Commonwealth's rare species, visit our web site at: www.nhesp.org.